

# State Vocational Federation of Teachers

P.O. Box 290  
Rocky Hill, CT 06067-0290

Ph: (860) 721-0317  
1-800-378-8020  
Fx: (860) 721-0323  
Web Site: [www.svft.org](http://www.svft.org)

Testimony of Ed DeSousa, Masonry Department Head at  
Bullard Havens Technical High School  
State Vocational Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 4200A

## **SB 379 An Act Concerning Vocational-Technical Schools**

Education Committee  
March 8, 2010

Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, and Committee members;

My name is Ed DeSousa and I am the Masonry Department Head at Bullard Havens Technical High School in Bridgeport.

This year, our system is celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Unfortunately, our purchasing system remains a relic of that time. As a Department Head, I am often left waiting well into September for money to be approved so I can buy supplies necessary to begin instruction. Meanwhile, my students can not receive the education they deserve. In my testimony to this committee last month, I discussed the cumbersome process that forced me to borrow a truck so I could obtain sixty dollars worth of sand that my students desperately needed to complete the masonry project they were assigned. Obviously, a purchasing process that cannot find sixty dollars for student education is woefully out of date.

The language in SB 379 addresses this problem. The required delivery of material before the start of the school year guarantees that students are not left waiting for the bureaucracy to grind on. Too often not only my students, but the students in production shops throughout the system, are left waiting for supplies that could be purchased with money that has already been approved. The flexibility provided in SB 379 best serves the needs of the students in our system. Every production teacher has valuable connections

within his or her community that can serve the financial needs of the state and the employment prospects of our students. However, we recognize that the superintendent is best positioned to differentiate between the legitimate connections between local business and the ethical demands of state purchasing. We believe that this bill does a good job in reconciling these interests.

As a Department Head in a production shop, I am greatly affected by the availability of adequate transportation to and from the job site. Too often I have had students waiting in the shops while production jobs, and the unique educational opportunities they afford, sit idle while our buses remain waiting for repair. Section 6 of SB 379 is a long overdue and much-welcome relief to our system. Too often our students are denied educational opportunities that relate directly to the jobs which they will soon occupy because ancient buses are unsafe. Too often the state denies itself a needed revenue stream because production work cannot be finished while buses sit remain waiting for repair.

While this bill is a much-needed and much-welcome step in the right direction, I respectfully ask you to consider some changes. The August 15<sup>th</sup> date for arranging bus inspection does not provide adequate time for the start of the school year. A July 10<sup>th</sup> inspection date would provide sufficient time to repair the buses before the students return. Additionally, there is no guarantee that a bus, used as hard as our buses may be used, will last ten full years. Believe me when I say we value our buses and every step is taken to protect them. However, problems happen. What will the State do when buses break down after eight years? I ask the committee to consider these scenarios when finalizing the bill.

As a graduate of our system, a business owner, and a teacher of 23 years, I understand the good our system can provide to our students and our state when it is allowed to do so. SB 379 is a welcome first step toward moving our system into the 21st century. I thank Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann and the entire committee for its foresight, its courage, and its commitment to quality vocational and technical education for the students of Connecticut. I believe that the benefits of this bill will be felt immediately and well into our future.

Thank you. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.